

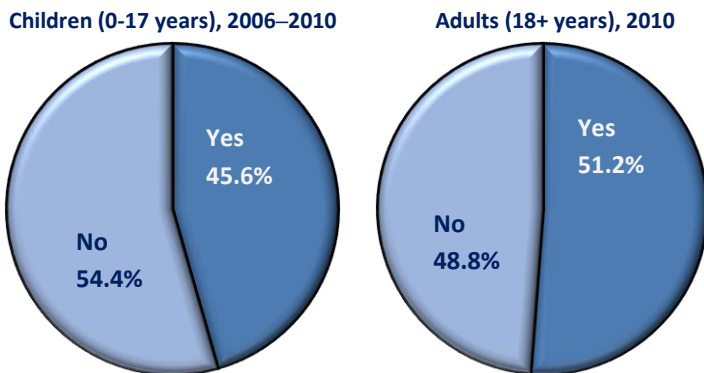


ASTHMA AND THE FLU

ASTHMA is a common chronic inflammatory disease that affects the lungs, causing repeated episodes of wheezing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. An estimated 9.5% of children and 9.6% of adults in Indiana currently have asthma.¹

INFLUENZA is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus. It is spread by respiratory droplets from close contact with infected persons or contact with contaminated surfaces or objects. In the United States, an estimated 5–20% of the population gets the flu each year, or approximately 15–62 million people.²

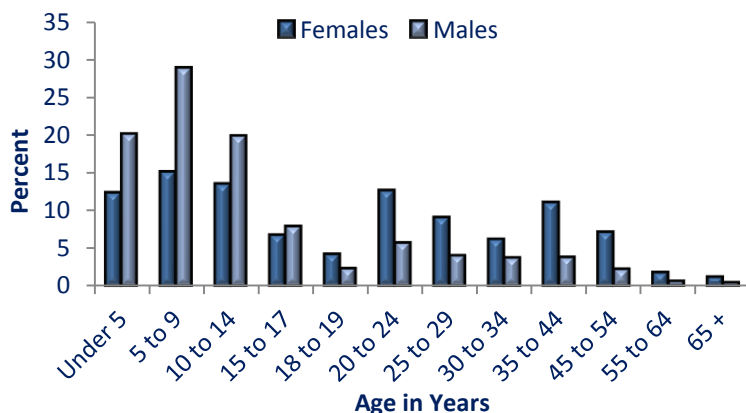
Figure 1. Percent of influenza vaccination among people with asthma*, Indiana⁹



Nearly one-half of Indiana adults (51.2%) and children (45.6%) who currently* have asthma receive a flu vaccination [Fig 1].

Male children account for 77.0% of emergency department (ED) visits for flu and asthma[†] compared to 47.2% of female children [Fig 2].

Figure 2. Distribution of emergency department visits for asthma and flu[†], by age group and sex, Indiana, 2009-2010¹⁰



*Among adults and children who currently have asthma

†Includes patients who had an asthma and flu diagnosis in the top 5 charges

Increased risk of complications

Having asthma does not increase the chance of getting the flu, but it does increase the risk of flu-related complications, even if asthma is well-controlled.^{3,4}

- ❑ Asthma causes airways to swell and be more reactive and sensitive.
- ❑ Influenza further increases airway inflammation, which can exacerbate asthma.

Flu vaccine recommendations⁵

Who?

- All persons 6 months of age and older

What?

- People with asthma or other chronic lung disorders should be given the inactivated (killed) flu virus as a **SHOT** and not the nasal spray/mist.

When?

- Every influenza season
- Children between the ages of 6 months and 8 years may need two doses to be protected.

Where?

- Health care provider, flu shot clinic, health department, walk-in clinic, pharmacy

Why?

- Influenza is vaccine preventable, which can prevent illness, hospitalizations and even death.

Is the flu shot safe?

- ❑ Yes. The vaccine is safe and effective in children and adults with asthma.⁵
- ❑ The inactivated vaccine does not increase asthma exacerbations.^{6,7,8}
- ❑ Flu shots do not contain a live virus so you cannot get the flu from the shot.
- ❑ People with asthma need to tell the person administering the vaccine about their asthma and other conditions such as allergies to eggs or latex.

Influenza Hospital Discharge Data, 2009-2010⁺¹⁰

- ❑ 1 in 4 flu hospitalizations involved individuals with asthma
- ❑ 2,557 ED visits were from asthma and flu
- ❑ 567 hospitalizations were from asthma and flu



Symptoms of Influenza

A health care provider can diagnose influenza by checking the symptoms or by swabbing the nose and testing for the influenza virus.

Symptoms include:

- ❑ Chills
- ❑ Headache
- ❑ Cough
- ❑ Sore throat
- ❑ Muscle aches

Influenza treatment for people with asthma

- ❑ If flu symptoms are present, seek medical care.
- ❑ Flu antiviral drugs can make flu illness milder and speed up recovery. Take them if your doctor recommends them.
- ❑ Treatment should begin as soon as possible (within 48 hours after symptoms start).
- ❑ People with asthma should not take zanamivir (Relenza®), an antiviral drug, because there is a risk it may cause wheezing in people that already have asthma or other lung problems.³

TAKE ACTION: If you have asthma, you need to take steps to fight the flu

- ❑ Everyone 6 months and older should get the flu shot, NOT the flu mist vaccine.
- ❑ There is not a licensed flu vaccine for children under 6 months of age.
- ❑ Practice good respiratory hygiene.
 - Use your elbow, upper arm, or a tissue to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water after coughing or sneezing.
 - Use alcohol-based hand cleaner if soap and water are not available.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Stay home when you are sick (except to get medical care) to prevent the disease from spreading to others.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth (germs are spread that way).
- ❑ Children (0-17 years) and adults over 65 years should also get the pneumococcal vaccine to protect against pneumonia.
- ❑ Follow an updated, written Asthma Action Plan developed with your doctor to manage and control asthma.

Community resources

- ❑ The Flu Shot Locator provides a searchable map to locate flu vaccination clinics.
- ❑ Local health departments can also provide locations for community vaccination clinics.
- ❑ For more information about the vaccine or virus <http://www.in.gov/flu/>.
- ❑ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's has information and resources on asthma and influenza.
- ❑ To learn more about the impact of influenza, visit the Faces of Influenza Campaign.
- ❑ For a list of asthma coalitions, programs and resources in Indiana, go to InJAC's Resources page, or call the Indiana Family Helpline (855-435-7178). Additional information can be found by visiting the Asthma Community Network.

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